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U.S. Department of the Interior

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Historical Park and  
Preserve.

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## Chalmette Battlefield Task Force Minutes

### Meeting Minutes

*Date of Meeting* May 28, 2003 at 3:00 p.m.  
*Location:* *Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve*  
*Chalmette Battlefield*  
*8606 West St. Bernard Hwy.*  
*Chalmette, Louisiana 70043*

#### *Task Force Members Present:*

Mr. Eric Cager  
Mrs. George W. Davis  
Mr. Anthony Fernandez, Jr.  
Mr. Alvin W. Guillot  
Mr. Drew Heaphy, CPA  
Mrs. Elizabeth McDougall, Chairperson  
Ms. Faith Moran  
Ms. Geraldine Smith  
Mr. Tim Bemisderfer, Federal Designated Officer for Regional Director  
Southeast Regional Office

#### *Task Force Members Absent:*

Capt. Bonnie Pepper Cook  
Mr. Paul V. Perez, CFP  
Col. John F. Pugh, Jr.  
Mr. Michael L. Fraering

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*Next Meeting.* *Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve*  
*Chalmette Battlefield*  
*8606 West St. Bernard Hwy.*  
*Chalmette, Louisiana 70043*

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The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Elizabeth McDougall in the auditorium of the Chalmette Battlefield Visitor Center. The 3/26/03 meeting minutes, attachments, and a sign-in sheet were distributed to all in attendance. The minutes were accepted with two minor corrections.

### **Old Business:**

The park submitted a statement of clarification to the Fact Finding Report submitted to the Task Force at the last meeting. Ms. McDougall asked the committee to review it for discussion at the next meeting.

A budget overview of the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery was provided to the Task Force as requested. This included a summary sheet and a complete copy of the park's budget. David Muth, Chief of Planning and Resource Stewardship, discussed the calculations used to derive the percentage of the park's budget for operation and maintenance of Chalmette. It was agreed to undertake further discussion of the budget at the next task force meeting. Muth indicated he was available to address any specific questions concerning the budget review or the calculations used to derive it.

Superintendent Smith discussed the current status of the Fazendeville Oral History project. She also announced that a full-sized print of the oil painting by Martin Pate, done for the park and donated by Southeast Archeological Center will be presented to the Battleground Baptist Church. The Task Force members will receive an invitation to the presentation at the church once plans are finalized for this event.

Ms. McDougall introduced St. Bernard Councilman Michael Bayham, District B. and thanked him for his attendance. She requested that meeting notices go out in a timely manner and that there be a least two weeks notice to all task force member and interested parties of upcoming meetings.

Ms. McDougall introduced Tim Bemisderfer, Federal Designated Officer. He introduced the regional planning team members: Mike Stanley, Landscape Architect; David Ates, Historic Architect; Frank Miele, Historian; Charles Lawson, Archeologist.

Several issues of concern to the Task Force for on-going grounds maintenance issues included: mowing issues; and drainage issues. Also discussed were operational concerns including; distribution of the St. Bernard Tourism guide; need for sign-in sheets vs. comment forms; and the absence of commercial vendor information sheets in the Visitor Center. Mr. William Hyland, St. Bernard Parish Historian, suggested that these issues be discussed at a later time so as to maximize the time for the site visit.

### **New Business:**

The group adjourned to the exhibit area of the visitor center. The discussion was opened by Tim Bemisderfer with several questions for the Task Force to consider:

- What long terms plans for a Visitor Center would you like to develop?
- What do you want to see in the Visitor Center in the future?(i.e. size, location, exhibits, facilities).
- What don't you have here now that you would like to have?
- What are the qualities of a good Visitor Center?

There was a discussion of the limitations of the size of the visitor center and a suggestion to move the location closer to the St. Bernard Highway. Mr. Hyland gave a review of past attempts to acquire the Port Authority property and the property across the highway.

Some of the suggested qualities for a visitor center were: more space; multiple areas to accommodate school groups and visitor activities; better theater facilities; an updated audiovisual multi-media presentation; and a more appropriate architectural style matching the character of the site.

Mr. Bemisderfer reviewed the two step process of the planning phase for a GMP amendment: (1) the recommendations for design alternatives and (2) the appropriation phase for obtaining the funding for a target date of 2015. He stressed the need for community and political support once a consensus of the task force is reached and a plan has been approved.

Several members expressed the need to expand the interpretive scope beyond the specifics of the Battle of New Orleans. More information should be included on the Naval segments of the campaign. It was felt that much of the larger story needs to be interpreted. Some specific points stressed were the context of the entire campaign in St. Bernard Parish, the effect of the battle on the nation and why control of the Port of New Orleans was so significant to the nation.

Dan Brown, Chief of Resource Education, added that in addition to the visitor center exhibits and multi-media presentations that publications, programs, wayside exhibits and living history activities could add to the visitor's experience and knowledge of the Battle of New Orleans.

### Monument

Dave Herrera, Deputy Superintendent, reviewed the present policy of leaving the monument open to visitors. The monument is to be open to the public without staff supervision only when safety conditions such as slippery metal stairs, or extremely low light conditions of the interior are not present. Other liability issues are being reviewed by park staff.

The concern for the vegetation growth in the masonry of the monument was discussed. Brian Strack, facility manager, discussed the history of the repointing of the monument in 1989. To properly clean, re-point, and seal the monument could be a project of over \$175,000. In the current fiscal 03-year program, limited funding has been obtained to perform stabilization work, which will treat and remove the vegetation but not provide for permanent repairs to the monument.

A project to place commemorative markers around the base of the monument to acknowledge the participation of all militia /troops engaged on the American side of the Battle of New Orleans was discussed. It is in the preliminary stages of compliance and review.

Mr. Bemisderfer asked "What are the top values that the Chalmette Monument adds to the visitor's experience at the Battlefield?" Some of the responses were: that the monument is on the St. Bernard Parish flag; it is the official symbol of St. Bernard Parish; the cornerstone was laid in 1841; and the long standing contributions and management of St. Bernard Parish citizens and the Daughters of 1812.

### Rampart & Cannons

It was noted that the rampart and cannons are the visual reference point that connects the battle to the visitors experience. However the question was asked, "What does the visitor do at the rampart?" Some other considerations were: purchasing a cannon for every gun emplacement in the rampart; replacement of wooden timbers; relocation and refurbishment of flag pole; use of the 15 star flag; increasing the height of the ramparts; a representation or interpretation of the flank movements of the British; addition of audio or multi-media stations on the ramparts.

### Battlefield Grounds Maintenance

Some of the committee members asked about the mowing practices on the battlefield and stated their preference for a more manicured field rather than the naturalized grass with stepped down levels now being implemented. Muth gave a review of the present mowing plan for the main field.

The buffer zone of trees along the St. Bernard Highway was discussed. Removal of the tree line and re-establishment of the iron fence was suggested by Mr. Alvin Gulliot. Mr. Muth mentioned that much of the land between the battlefield and the highway is outside the boundaries of the park.

### Malus-Beauregard House

Mr. Bemisderfer asked the question "What uses do you see for the house?"

Mr. Eric Cager opened the comments with a discussion of the possibility of using the Malus-Beauregard House(MBH) as an interpretive site for the other events associated with the cultural landscape and history of the site. He, as a representative of the descendents of the Fazendeville village, noted that there are descendents still living who have memories of the MBH and events associated with it. He feels that the MBH would be the proper location to tell the story of the village. Other suggestion included interpretive mention of its architectural style to river plantations; stressing the connection to General Beauregard as a former owner; restoration and furnishing of the house; and the reactivation of the high school living-history group the Little Colonels who wore ante-bellum period dress and served as docents at the house in the past. It was mentioned that the second floor is presently used for storage. More operational conditions and details of the house could be addressed at the next meeting.

Other items of interest regarding interpretation of the battlefield included the possibility of a river overlook. This resulted in a discussion of the ownership of the riverfront property and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction of permits necessary for management or removal of any vegetation from the river's edge.

### Archeological Resources

Planning team Archeologist Lawson provided information regarding archeological resources. Members agreed that even though they are not a visible resource, they are indeed present and should interpreted even if only by wayside exhibits. This led to a discussion of the present

wayside exhibits and if they should be reviewed. Funding to replace the existing wayside exhibits has been authorized for the park.

#### National Cemetery Draft Condition Assessment

Brian Strack, facility manager, will provide an update on the current contract for conducting a detailed condition assessment of the Chalmette National Cemetery. The assessment will provide information on the rehabilitation and stabilization needs for the cemetery walls, site drainage, grave marker preservation, and other specific cemetery issues. The final condition assessment report is not expected until mid August.

Due to time constraints and the need for the task force to view the National Cemetery, the sewage treatment plant, tour road, cypress swamp and drainage concerns, the July 30, 2003 task force meeting was scheduled to meet at the Chalmette Battlefield Visitor Center at 4:00pm.

The minutes for May 28, 2003 are submitted July 30, 2003 for adoption. Chalmette Battlefield Task Force minutes will be posted on the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve web site, <http://www.nps.gov/jela>

 8/24/03

Ms. Elizabeth McDougall      Date  
Chairperson

 8/27/03

Tim Beimisderfer      Date  
Federal Designated Officer